

535 gyrated in all directions, at one moment appearing inextricably
 585 mixed together, only to disentangle miraculously at the next and
 weave themselves into fresh spirals and circles, singing abuse at
 each other. All the while the group of standing girls went on
 [533] swaying and singing round the door; the leader caused great
 laughter by improvising a song warning all girls to be on their guard
 that night, for the Diwan, the Tahsildar and the Circle Inspector
 were watching them, and who knew what might happen after dark?

583 Before we arrived the bridegroom's party had presented the
 bride-price, which consisted of one slaughtered pig, a live pig, five
 • 43/ very large pots of *landa*, five *paili* of husked rice, four yards of
 585 Mahra cloth for the bride's mother, and one rupee. While the
 chains of girls were dancing around the bride and bridegroom, her
 mother's sister came out and displayed the bride's going-away
 presents, a *masni* or grass sleeping-mat, a small basket containing
 about a *paili* of husked rice, a large pot of *landa*, and a young bull
 calf newly weaned.

585 Some men wearing their bison-horn dancing head-dresses and
 beating their long drums now started to dance near the gyrating
 chains of girls, and there was a further accompaniment to the singing
 of baribon flutes. The two chains of girls suddenly opened out,
 leaving the bridegroom and bride together, and the girl's father
 and the bridegroom's elder brother were with them, holding their
 hands. The old father, Kunjami Harma, held up his hand for
 silence, and started a long speech, asking the bridegroom's elder
 brother, 'Have you come willingly for this flower? Will you wear
 it and cherish it? It is fresh and tender, and will not bear rough
 handling. Know you how witless women are? If she be a poor
 housekeeper, pardon her. If she cook badly, pardon her. If she
 speak to other men, do not take it amiss, but pardon her.' There
 were other similar injunctions, and to all the bridegroom's brother
 answered yes. Then Kunjami Harma took his daughter, who took
 the bridegroom's right hand, and placed on his little finger a ring
 that she had pulled off the little finger of her own right hand; the
 bridegroom then took a ring off his own left little finger and placed
 it on hers; cloths were held over their heads while this exchange
 was in progress. The bridegroom then took off another ring,
 which the girl's elder sister received in her outstretched cloth, while
 she said, 'From now onwards you must neither touch me nor utter
 my name till I am dead. If you do, all will laugh at you, and your
 brethren will fine you.' I was told that if she dies before him, he
 will take a ring off her little finger and wear it on the middle finger
 of his right hand. He also gave a ring to the bride's younger sister,
 for he is free to touch her and to talk of her by name. Then his

SUPPLEMENT

369

VII

I found it very difficult—and I suspect that Grigson had the same experience—to see Marias in action. Tribes vary greatly in their willingness to allow a visitor to be present at their ceremonial. The Murias used to invite me to marriages or festivals, sending information about them long beforehand. The Saoras are delighted to have visitors at their celebrations and more than once the ghost of a long dead headman has come upon the priest and admonished the people to treat me right. But the Bondos do their utmost to keep the stranger away; during the great summer festival they pile the paths leading to their villages with thorn bushes and not even a fellow Bondo, if he belongs to another village, is admitted. The Marias do not go so far as that, yet I found them singularly unwilling to let me watch them do anything. When I was camping at Borgum I heard that the Wijja Pandum was to be celebrated in two days' time and rather unwisely announced my intention of being present. On the morning of the festival a delegation arrived in camp to say that the proceedings had had to be postponed because the Perma's wife was in her period—though I darkly suspect that the old lady had in fact passed the climacteric. I had to dodge round the country for weeks before I saw a wedding, and to witness the Ghotpal Marhai I had to come sixty miles on an elephant down from the Abujmar because the dates were changed at the last moment.

But since a page of personal observation is worth a whole chapter of hearsay I will describe the wedding at which I assisted and the great festival at Ghotpal in 1942.

On March 15th, 1942 I was camping in Gogonda at the edge of the hills overlooking the great southern plain. That evening, I was told, two girls were to be taken to Sirsitti, a village some two thousand feet below, to be married. At about five o'clock therefore married and unmarried women collected and began to dance with one of the brides. She had her head and shoulders completely covered with a shawl and wailed loudly all the time. Three pots of rice-beer were distributed to the dancers and a large number of onlookers, and then the dancers took the bride round the village. This was a very pretty sight. The circle of dancers would suddenly elongate into a line and then curl up again in a ring. As they danced from house to house, men and women would come out and put a ring on the bride's finger or a necklace round her neck and embrace her by raising her hands twice to their foreheads and then clasping her in their arms. As they did so, the dancers sang the names of the people who were giving presents and their exact relationship to the bride. At other times they sang how the girl had hitherto been going to and fro freely in the jungle, getting wood, husking grain,

796
609

585

585
535

[431]

585
533

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

Such privileges are not universal or uncontrolled. In Junganar only very small Ganda girls may massage the boys or sleep in the ghotul; once they are mature, though they may attend the dances, they may not massage and must say Johar at a distance. This rule seems to have been made by the Ganda elders rather than by the Muria. For the Muria are generally more anxious to control the behaviour of the boys of other castes; girls are allowed to do what they like.

The relations of Muria and Muria-Lohar are discussed in more than one song. Here is a Manda dance song from Tursani village.

<i>Jāging poyi weks dāda roy song</i>	Where are you going with your
<i>busur bhusbās?</i>	bamboo basket, brother?
<i>Nia dāti pāri dāda?</i>	What is your clan, brother?
<i>Pāri ori hile bai.</i>	I have no clan, girl.
<i>Jāti wāde lyona bai.</i>	I am a Lohar boy, girl.
<i>Nima weks dān ton dāda?</i>	Where are you going, brother?
<i>Irum mara koyala bai</i>	To get charcoal of mahua wood, girl.
<i>Koyala pandi dān tona bai</i>	I am going to make charcoal, girl.
<i>Nana gala wāyāha dāda.</i>	I will come with you, brother.
<i>Nima icho wāyama bai.</i>	Don't come with me, girl.
<i>Jāti dube māyār bai.</i>	Your caste will be broken, girl.
<i>Sarus pile jori dāda.</i>	Two cranes make a perfect pair,
	brother.

Jori ise ayahāt dāda.

We will pair off like them, brother.

A Har Pata, sung when the girls of Kehalakot go to dance in other ghotul at Diwali, is on the same theme.

Pāri porro nititon bai le.

On the bank of the field you were standing, girl.

Niya pāri wāti roy bai le?

What is your clan?

Pāri ori hile roy dāda le.

I have no clan, brother.

Nāwa pāri āteh roy dāda le.

If I had a clan, it would be yours.

Jāti sori layāna dāda le.

I am a girl of the Sori clan, brother.

Niya pāri wāti roy dāda le?

What is your clan, brother?

Pāri ori hile roy bai le.

I have no clan, girl.

Jāti wāde layona bai le

I am a blacksmith boy.

Titi dāda uti roy dāda le,

You have eaten and drunk me, brother,

Jāti dube hili roy dāda le.

And have made my caste sink down.

Naturally such an arrangement sometimes leads to trouble. At Sarandi a Lohar chelik ran off with a Muria motiari, and since then outsiders have not been admitted there. At Gohora, the Saidar—a Rawat boy—eloped with the Piosa who was a Muria girl, and the ghotul was henceforward closed to visitors.

VI. RELATIONS BETWEEN DIFFERENT GHOTUL

Members of different ghotul meet at dances, marriages and festivals. They visit each other on dancing expeditions throughout the year. Sometimes they have dancing contests. Neighbouring ghotul send gifts to each other, especially at the time of eating parched rice at Diwali. Thus when I was at Siūhawand, the boys put aside a good portion of their parched rice to send to the Kokameta ghotul with which they had relations of special friendship. At Banjora they sent one measure of rice to Bhopna and one measure to Kokori asking the boys and girls of those ghotul to share their feast. Bhopna and Kokori returned the gifts at the Chherta festival.

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

302 The pubic hairs, reference to which can be made the most inflammatory of insults, are entirely removed by girls. They are supposed to smear the hairs with wood-ash and pull them out. 'If a woman uses a razor for this', we were told at Phauda, 'she will become very heavy after death, and the men who carry out her body will laugh and say, "She's one of those who used a razor"'.¹

III. COMBS

Belle marräle pungür puy ända

On a dry tree blossoms a flower—A comb

412 In the intimate life of chelik and motiari the comb plays a most important part. It is used every night by the motiari when they tidy the hair of the boys. It is used to titillate the skin of back and arms. In many places it is one of the most popular forms of personal adornment. Both boys and girls wear it but it is essentially a girl's possession and a girl's decoration. In Binjhli I remember seeing a row of girls walking in file; each of them had ten or fifteen combs arranged in lines on the left side of the head. But there is no rule about this. Sometimes the combs are in the back hair, sometimes on both sides. Boys wear one or two combs in the turban, or stuck in the back hair.

531 Different types of comb are illustrated in Figs. 67-70, 74-5, and 80-1. I believe the patterns are simply for decorative purposes and have no magical significance. Thurston has an interesting passage, which unfortunately he does not illustrate, about the strikingly similar designs of the combs of the Negritos of Malacca and the Kadir of the Anaimalai Hills.² Preuss had worked out a theory that the patterns were not geometrical, but consisted of a series of hieroglyphics.³ Thurston, however, believed that the Kadir comb decorations were only conventional. The bamboo combs worn by Semang women are said to be talismans against disease,⁴ but neither Kadir nor Muria combs seem to have this meaning. The Muria combs are often carved with phallic symbols—but their aim is not magical, but the very practical one of arousing sexual interest.⁵

431 For a girl to possess a large number of combs does not necessarily mean that she is specially popular; more probably it implies that she has a very

¹ With this may be compared a Gond proverbial saying recorded in Mandla. 'The carriers lifted up the pubic hairs to make the corpse lighter, but found it made no difference.'

² Thurston, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 271.

³ E. T. Preuss, 'Die Zauberbilder Schriften der Negrito in Malaya' in *Globus*, 1899. Schebesta, however, considers that this, like the flower-pattern theory of Vaughan Stevens, is 'entirely baseless'. F. Schebesta, 'The Decorative Art of the Aborigines of the Malay Peninsula', *JRAS* (1929), p. 749. (See Fig. 76)

⁴ W. W. Skeat and C. O. Blagden, *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula* (London, 1906), Vol. I, pp. 390ff. For the magical significance of the comb, see also J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales* (London, 1890), Vol. I, p. lxxi; L. Garnett, *Greek Folk Poetry* (London, 1896), Vol. II, p. 437. The occurrence of the comb on early Celtic monuments points to the value set on it. See Macculloch, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

⁵ In several tribes, the gift of a comb is an essential part of the marriage ceremony. This is so among the Muduvar.—Thurston, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 93. The Kadir bridegroom should always make a comb and present it to his future wife just before marriage or at the end of the ceremony.—*Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 28. At a Kuki marriage, the priest presents husband and wife with small combs. 'Combs, perhaps these particular combs, are very sacred things. It is very unlucky to lose them, and man and wife only may use the same comb. When a man dies, his comb is buried with him, and his near relations break their combs and must roam with dishevelled hair for a few days before they renew them.'—Dalton, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

PERSONAL ADORNMENT AND POSSESSIONS



FIG. 87. Head-band of sago palm fibre from
Malakot (see p. 383)
Length 23"



FIG. 88. Neck-band of date palm fibre from
Bayanar (see p. 385)
Length 16"

devoted lover. Every comb, however, is a gift. When a girl wants a new one she brings two annas' worth of silver metal from the bazaar and that



FIG. 89. Cowrie head-band from Ultra. The cowries are attached to a
cord made of carefully woven sago palm fibre
(See p. 386)



DETAIL

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

x288

● 431

836

412

301

night goes to comb the hair of the boy from whom she desires a present. She does his hair with special care and whispers in his ear, 'Look, boy, I have brought some silver, make me a nice comb'. The boy says, 'I don't know how to'. The girl says, 'But of course you know'. Then the boy says, 'Well, what will you give me? Will you....?' The girl says, 'Never', meaning 'Yes', and the boy makes the comb.

In well-disciplined ghotul a boy cannot give a comb to a motiari without the permission of the Kotwar; sometimes it has actually to pass through the Kotwar's hands. For such a gift seems to be regarded as a very definite and important step in the love relations between a boy and girl, and it is considered necessary by the ghotul authorities to keep a check on such intimacies in case there is any scandal or trouble. To this witness some lines in a Paskna Pata from Bandopal:

Where did you get a comb like that?

You got it from the embrace of a chelik.

One comb for once, two combs for twice.

x883

303

301

If a comb is lost or broken, the chelik must make a new one. Otherwise his motiari says, 'How can I comb his hair?' If the Kotwar hears about it, he orders the boy to make one, and he does so at once.

Most combs are made of mahua or karraha wood. Implements used in their manufacture are a small saw, $\frac{3}{4}$ " broad and 6" long, rather like a fret-saw; a *kadri* knife; a *hujji* chisel and a *tatti* adze.

The Kotwar of the Phunder ghotul made a comb for me. He took a piece of mahua wood 2' long and 3" broad, supported one end on a bit of wood and gradually planed down one end, first with the adze and then with his knife. He stood it on end and trimmed the top; then with the saw cut a number of slits 1" deep, measuring them with a twig to ensure that they were even. He cut them again and again to enlarge the slits, leaving on either side of the wood a space uncut.

Now another boy came and held the wood firmly, and the Kotwar cut off $1\frac{1}{4}$ " from the top with his saw, first cutting half through on one side, then turning the wood over and doing it from the other. Finally he broke the piece off and trimmed it with his knife. So far the process had taken half an hour, but the small piece of wood had taken shape as a comb. The boy now spent fifteen minutes shaping the sides, then with his chisel he enlarged the slits again and carefully cleaned the apertures between the spikes. After this, he held the comb in the hollow of his left hand and grasping the chisel firmly in the right and pressing it down hard began to decorate the comb with various patterns. By the time he had finished, he had spent two-and-a-half hours on the work, the greater part of the time being spent on the decoration.

[314]

The next morning the Kotwar went to a wild fig tree to extract its sticky, milky gum. He struck a branch with the blunt end of his axe and caught some drops of gum in a leaf-cup. He brought this back and sat down by a fire. He spread the gum on either side of the comb with a bit of straw, warmed it on the fire, applied more gum, laid the silver paper over it and rubbed it in hard with the handle of his chisel till the pattern showed. He repeated the process on the opposite side toasting the comb before the fire by sticking it on the end of his chisel. Finally he brought out the pattern clearly by pressing in the silver paper with his own finger-nails, and washed it with a straw dipped in water.